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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' JUNE 13 LUNCH WITH FRENCH FM KOUCHNER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CRAIG R STAPLETON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (U) June 13, 2007, 1:00 P.M.

[1](#)2. (U) Participants:

U.S.
Under Secretary Burns
Ambassador Stapleton
Ambassador Frank Wisner, U.S. Special Envoy for Kosovo Final
Status Issues
P Staff Bame
Pol Espinoza (notetaker)

France
Foreign Minister Kouchner
Political Director Araud
A/S-equivalent for non-EU Europe Faure
FM Cabinet Advisor Dumont
FM Cabinet Advisor Errera
Political Director Staff Veyssiere

[1](#)3. (C) SUMMARY: U/S Burns and French FM Kouchner discussed Kosovo, Lebanon, Darfur, Iran, and domestic French politics over lunch on June 13. Burns convinced Kouchner to agree to the principle of Kosovo independence and the U.S. strategy for moving forward in the UNSC. Kouchner noted that while he agreed that Kosovo independence was the only possible outcome, the Quint should demonstrate first to the world that it had made every possible effort to find agreement between the parties and in the UNSC before moving to recognize Kosovo independence. President Sarkozy, he said, would have the final say for the GOF on the recognition of an independent Kosovo. Kouchner agreed with Burns that U.S.-France unity on Lebanon was the key to past and future success on the ground and in the UNSC. Burns noted the difference in Hizballah policies and expressed concern about the effects of inviting Hizballah to Kouchner's proposed conference in Paris. Kouchner insisted that Hizballah's presence was necessary for the credibility of political dialogue, but noted that France continued to fully support PM Siniora.

[1](#)4. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Kouchner highlighted his goals for the Darfur conference: (1) support for the Chad operation and for the sites where displaced individuals are concentrated, and (2) support for AMIS troops. While not completely ruling out further sanctions, he questioned their timelines, while adding he had warned Khartoum that Europe might follow the United States if there was no progress. Kouchner did not believe sanctions would work in Iran and encouraged the USG to speak with Iran and reach out to the Iranian people. Burns explained USG policy and suggested that economic sanctions were a logical extension of U.S. and EU3 political pressure, though Russian and Chinese stances might require further sanctions outside the UNSC. On domestic politics,

Kouchner noted Sarkozy's strong mandate, but said that foreign policy would only see shifts in approach, not policy.

Kouchner flagged as his only key disagreement with Sarkozy Turkey's European integration. (NOTE: This lunch was held on June 13, the day following the Kosovo political directors' quint meeting and a Burns' dinner with PolDir Araud. The lunch preceded Burns' meeting with Presidential Diplomatic Advisor Jean-David Levitte. END NOTE) END SUMMARY

KOSOVO

15. (C) Kouchner told U/S Burns and Ambassador Wisner that, absent a UNSCR, we would need to demonstrate to the world that we had made every conceivable attempt to find an agreement between the parties and in the UN Security Council before moving to Quint recognition of an independent Kosovo. Burns stressed the importance of Quint unity and reviewed Quint discussions on a strategy to move forward based in large part on Sarkozy's G-8 proposal: (1) Quint agreement on Kosovo independence as the final outcome; (2) a push now in the Security Council for a UNSCR in order to gauge Russia's reaction; (3) if a Russian veto still remained likely, we would allow three to six months for dialogue between the parties and prepare mechanisms for independence without a UNSCR; and (4) if there is no agreement between the parties or in the UNSC at that time, the Quint and others would move to recognize an independent Kosovo. Kouchner agreed in principle with the proposal, but did not appear to attach as much importance to a timetable. Somewhat jokingly, Kouchner referred to his birthday in early November as a possible deadline for dialogue to end and independence to begin.

16. (C) Political Director Araud nonetheless remained guarded

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about French recognition of Kosovo and feared a European clash on the issue -- particularly with the Italians and Spanish. Kouchner was less worried about the Spanish, with whom he would meet that evening, and he suggested that Secretary Rice could bring the Italians along with a phone

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call. Araud focused on legal concerns throughout the conversation and reiterated that a Russian veto would put Europe in an incredibly difficult legal situation. Wisner said that the U.S. understood the political difficulties and would do its best to assist.

17. (C) Wisner explained that the U.S. thought constructive dialogue between the parties could only take place if both the Serbs and Kosovars understood that independence was the final outcome. Serbia, Wisner said, might be more willing to engage on specific issues of concern if the Quint made clear that recognition of an independent Kosovo was inevitable. Burns added that dialogue would be most useful if led by Ahtisaari. Kouchner countered that Foreign Ministers must be involved in the process and reiterated his earlier proposal (from a Quint telephone conference the previous week) that Quint ministers visit the region together. He explained that Ahtisaari, for whom he had great admiration, had not been able to identify the right interlocutors and influential people in the region with whom to make his case.

18. (C) Kouchner feared violence in the coming weeks against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo, and insisted that Quint partners deliver a clear message to Pristina about the sensitivity of the coming months. Wisner agreed to pass the message to the Kosovars, but added that he would also be taking a positive agenda to Pristina, pushing them to move forward quickly on reforms and other preparations for independence; a lot of work remained to be accomplished. He agreed to provide Kouchner and Araud an account of his June 14-17 Kosovo trip. Kouchner agreed to take a similar message during his upcoming mission to the region, and added he would be traveling across

Kosovo, not only to Pristina.

LEBANON

¶9. (C) U/S Burns stressed to Kouchner that U.S.-French unity on Lebanon policy was the cornerstone of any success we had had on the ground and in the UN Security Council. It was vital that we preserve that cooperation without surprise initiatives, such as the GOF-proposed conference, and continue to put pressure on Syria not to reinsert itself into Lebanon.

Kouchner agreed that U.S.-French cooperation was essential and noted that his proposed conference for Lebanon would only be a forum for political dialogue; it was not a signal of any impending policy change. Kouchner added that the invitation to Hizballah in no way meant that the GOF did not support Siniora, but was a reaction to the reality of Lebanon. Siniora and the March 14 movement did not represent the majority of Lebanese, he said. Kouchner clarified that the event would be at the sub-cabinet level and added that Siniora had agreed on June 12 to send a representative to the conference. "If they don't all come, we won't have it," Kouchner noted.

¶10. (C) Burns acknowledged differences over policy on Hizballah, and wondered whether Hizballah's participation in the conference would undermine UNSC efforts to maintain pressure on it to disarm. Kouchner responded that "inviting them would not change anything." Hizballah, Kouchner argued, had to be a part of the political dialogue, or the forum would lack credibility. Burns suggested, and Kouchner agreed in principle, that the question of illegal arms and financial support from Syria to groups other than the LAF had to be a part of the discussion.

¶11. (C) Kouchner said he was not overly concerned about a possible summer offensive by Syria and Hizballah against Israel, but did not rule out the possibility. He said that the current problem was Fatah al-Islam, which was responsible for the incidents inside the Palestinian refugee camps. Kouchner judged that there was a new unity in Lebanon to back the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Araud added that Hizballah had nothing to gain from attacking Israel, but that Syria was a different matter. Lebanese Hizballah and Syria, Araud insisted, were not the same entity.

DARFUR

¶12. (C) Kouchner characterized Khartoum's signature to the Hybrid Force agreement as a deliverable from his visit to the

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region, but was somewhat pessimistic about the agreement's significance. He said that Khartoum had accepted to receive "experts," which was how the Chinese referred to their troop contribution -- but Kouchner questioned the practical implications of Khartoum's language.

¶13. (C) Burns pushed Kouchner on individual Sudan sanctions, laying out the U.S. position that sanctions would help to increase pressure on the regime. Convincing China in the UNSC was an uphill battle. Kouchner indicated that sanctions were not the priority for France at the moment, but that he had warned Khartoum that Europe could follow the USG if there was no progress.

¶14. (C) Khartoum, despite having never been invited to the Paris ministerial, had recently refused to attend, Kouchner said. "They want our money, but they won't take our soldiers -- it's not possible." The minister, after expressing his hope that Secretary Rice would attend, laid out two key issues he hoped the ministerial would address: (1) support for the Chad operation and aid for sites where displaced

people were living-- he described the situation as desperate, and (2) support for the AMIS forces who had not been paid since January. Kouchner said that UNSYG Ban Ki-moon had accepted to attend, as well as the Chinese, though he was not convinced that the FM would really come. He expressed deep frustration that there would be no Africans present at the conference.

IRAN

¶15. (C) Kouchner pushed back on Burns' proposal that the USG and Europe implement sanctions against Iran outside the framework of the UN Security Council if China and Russia proved unwilling to cooperate fully, insisting that sanctions were ineffective and "cannot get what we need." The Minister counseled that pressure on the regime had to come from inside the country, and that our strategy had to include talking to Iran and the Iranian people -- whom he judged to be largely against the Ayatollahs. Kouchner insisted that while they might not talk to the USG, they would talk to France.

¶16. (C) Burns explained that U.S. policy on Iran was clear -- Iran would not become a nuclear military power, and the United States would not talk to Iran directly until it suspended enrichment. Use of force, while a last resort, would not be taken off the table. Solana, Burns said, had warned the Secretary the previous day that he did not believe Larijani was prepared to make any concessions. Everyone, Burns stressed, was now against Iran, and sanctions could help to couple economic and political pressure on the regime. Kouchner suggested that the Iran issue would require further discussion. COMMENT: Araud openly disagreed with Kouchner's characterization of sanctions and their impact. Kouchner's comments appeared to be more of a critique of U.S. and EU-3 policy since the crisis began; he offered no operational way forward. Kouchner's presentation did not track with the existing French approach on holding Iran firmly to its IAEA and UNSC commitments. Kouchner's negativism on sanctions also contrasted with Diplomatic Advisor Levitte's views (septel). END COMMENT

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

¶17. (C) Kouchner described the Socialist Party (PS) as near its end while fighting out an internal battle. A new party would emerge, but he was not convinced of its ability to build a strong coalition. He described Segolene Royal as childish, and mocked her current politicking. Kouchner said that the Sarkozy administration had a solid mandate for moving forward on the domestic front, but that he didn't expect any major new foreign policy changes, only different approaches. For the moment, he noted, his only major foreign policy difference with Sarkozy was over Turkey's European vocation. Kouchner off-handedly commented that he could imagine resigning from the government if he were to disagree with Sarkozy on a issue of serious principle.

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